

EXHIBIT 29
DATE 1-25-07
HB 2

Madame Chairperson,

I'm Kris Gray, branch manager of A Plus Healthcare in the Helena branch. I know that the goal for all of us is to providing a stable, quality workforce to provide care to our Medicaid population. In order to do this, we must be able to offer competitive wages and benefits. Quality jobs promote quality care.

We struggle daily with worker shortages, high turnover rates, and retention problems because we are not able to provide competitive wages, yearly cost of living raises, or health insurance. It is becoming more and more difficult to provide essential care to our clients. Just this week I had 2 care attendants come into my office and ask to not be assigned to medication reminders. We are authorized 15 minutes for medication reminders so care attendants get paid about \$2.15 to make this visit. They feel it's not worth their time. Medication reminders might seem like a small task but these reminders are often times the difference between clients being able to live at home or going to a nursing home. We also have care attendants that ask not to provide transportation because mileage reimbursement does not cover the cost of fuel or wear and tear on their vehicles.

I would also like to comment on reimbursement for nursing visits. In this day and age with the nursing shortage and the extra efforts of facilities to recruit nurses. Once again we are unable to compete because we can not offer competitive wages or benefits to recruit experience nurses to provide the care.

Perhaps looking at these issues every 2 years in a legislative session is not the most effective way to address these issues. Mirroring Medicare Home Health and Hospice reimbursement activity would keep it ongoing so these issues do not become stagnant. A cost report is prepared yearly and reimbursement is based on the costs reports, wage index, and other factors.

I urge you to support Senate bill 206. Let's provide these invaluable workers with the support they need to continue quality care for Montana's residents.

LPN = 26,36
RN = 31.24